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COORDINATING ROLE OF THE CENTRE FOR HUMAN RIGHTS WITHIN THE UNITED NATIONS BODIES AND MACHINERY DEALING WITH THE PROMOTION AND PROTECTION OF HUMAN RIGHTS

Report of the Secretary-General prepared pursuant to Commission resolution 1991/22

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Introduction

1. In its resolution 1991/22, entitled "Coordinating role of the Centre for Human Rights", adopted at its forty-seventh session on 5 March 1991, the Commission on Human Rights again invited the Secretary-General to request Governments, the specialized agencies and intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations to express their views on the strengthening of the activities of the Centre for Human Rights, with special emphasis on new directions and forms, including increasing the representation of under-represented groups of States, notably the developing countries, in senior and policy-formulating posts in the Centre, while safeguarding the principle of equitable geographical distribution, in accordance with the relevant resolutions of the General Assembly, particularly resolution 45/125 on the improvement of the status of women in the secretariat, and to submit a report setting out those views and opinions to the Commission at its forty-eighth session.

2. Pursuant to the above resolution, the Secretary-General requested Governments, United Nations specialized agencies and intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations, by a note verbale and a letter of 29 November 1991 to express their views on the subject-matter.

3. In reply to his request, the Secretary-General received views from the Governments of China and Thailand. These replies are contained in section I of the present report. A reply with comments was also received from the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights of the Organization of American States. This reply is contained in section II. Any further comments will be submitted in addenda to the present report.

I. COMMENTS PROVIDED BY GOVERNMENTS

China

[Original: Chinese]
[17 January 1992]

The United Nations Centre for Human Rights is giving full rein to the important task of coordination of the protection and promotion of human rights and fundamental freedoms. The Chinese Government attaches the highest importance to the work of the Centre and to the cooperation that it has had with the staff of the Centre over the years.

In accordance with article 101 of the Charter of the United Nations, the highest possible regard should be paid in the recruitment of staff to geographical representativeness. The Commission on Human Rights has passed resolutions on the subject on several occasions. Yet there are still problems with the current proportions of staff in the Centre: the representation of certain regions is not at the bottom of their desirable ranges. It is the view of the Chinese Government that if the coordinating efforts of the Centre are to be boosted, the first thing to do is respect the principle of equitable geographical distribution and correct the previous imbalance: in particular, the representation of developing countries needs to be increased.

Next, in keeping with the spirit of Commission on Human Rights resolution 1991/22, adopted at the forty-seventh session, it is important to ensure that no post in the Centre for Human Rights is considered the exclusive preserve of any member State or group of States and to increase the representation of populous States in senior and policy-formulated posts in the Centre.

Thirdly, given that different regions of the world have different legal systems, the Centre ought to have representatives of each system on its staff in order to guarantee its broad representativeness and promote its universality in drawing up programmes, providing advisory services and drafting international human rights documents.

Fourthly, in keeping with General Assembly resolution 45/125, the representation of women, especially women from developing countries, in the Centre needs to be increased.

The Chinese Government hopes that the Secretary-General will, as he extends the powers of the Centre for Human Rights, give full attention to the above points and instruct the Centre to take appropriate action and act in the spirit of the Charter and the relevant resolutions of the General Assembly and the Commission on Human Rights, thereby allowing it full play in its functions.

Thailand

[Original: English]
[13 January 1992]

Thailand supports increasing the representation of developing countries in senior and policy-formulating posts in the Centre.

As the focal point of the United Nations in the field of human rights, the Centre could strengthen its activities in the following manner:

(a) It might serve as a two-way focal point, i.e. in the transmission of information between human rights bodies/organizations and Governments through various procedures having been or to be established by the Commission on Human Rights.

(b) If it obtains the approval of the World Conference on Human Rights, it might produce more analytical works, aimed at fostering international cooperation in the field of human rights in the wider perspective of international relations, with less emphasis on "compliance" with so-called "international standards" and more on methods and incentives for Governments to develop voluntarily and effectively better domestic law and better administration of justice.

(c) Programmes of work in the area of technical assistance and advisory services would also serve to create an atmosphere of cooperation between non-govermental organizations and government agencies.

II. OTHER COMMENTS RECEIVED

Intergovernmental organizations

Inter-American Commission on Human Rights of the Organization of American States

[Original: English]
[27 December 1991]

The view of our Commission is that the work of the Centre can be assured and improved in keeping with burgeoning demands if the United Nations appropriates the necessary resources to allow the Centre to hire necessary staff, particularly from the developing countries, so that the Centre will have the manpower it needs to fulfil its mandate.

Current rules on geographic distribution need not be altered because, as enacted, they will assure the contracting of new staff members from underrepresented countries, thereby strengthening the Centre's endeavours and broadening the geographical representation of its personnel.